

## Historic Structure Field Collections

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**T**he primary collections of the Harry S Truman National Historic Site in Independence, Missouri, are from the Truman home given to the United States government in 1983. The site and associated collections managed by the National Park Service (NPS) primarily include artifacts from the occupation of the Truman home by four generations of the Gates, Wallace, and Truman families, 1867-1982. The site was expanded in 1991 to include the George and Frank Wallace homes (homes once occupied by Bess Wallace Truman's brothers and their wives) and the Noland home, occupied by Harry Truman's aunt and uncle, John and Ella Noland. The Truman farm home located in Grandview, Missouri, was added to the site in 1994. This portion of the site is part of the original farm where Harry Truman worked from 1906 to 1917. According to his mother, the farm was where Harry Truman "got his common sense." Each site provides us the opportunity to share the importance of family and experiences that shaped the life and character of Harry Truman.

Collection acquisitions are few, because the Truman home was given with complete contents and furnishings. The Truman farm home was transferred to the NPS from Jackson County, Missouri, complete with original and period furnishings. The other three homes are slated for adaptive use and do not require collection acquisition. The site's collections policy has been to accept only objects directly associated with the Truman home or farm home or used in these homes during the Truman years. The exceptions to this policy are field collections generated by replacement of deteriorated historic building fabric described in this article. Maintaining this type of field collection and supporting documentation is essential to documenting existing structure condition and to planning and preparing for accurate replacement of historic fabric.

Several site projects have demonstrated the value of field collections and the need to preserve and maintain the collections. In 1985, a major restoration project was begun at the Truman home which included removal of wood brackets from beneath the roof overhangs. Original brackets replaced were documented and placed in the museum storage area as a field collection. Several years later wood rot was found in original brackets still on the house and it became necessary to gather information about the brackets. Information

on wood type, measurements, method of construction, and special features of the brackets was readily available for study, and maintenance staff were not required to scale the building to record the details necessary to reproduce the brackets.

In 1990, the re-roofing of the Truman home, by the NPS Williamsport Preservation Training Center (WPTC), prompted the need for data collection and acquisition of field collections related to the structures. The asphalt shingles in place were installed in 1969 when Harry and Bess Truman made the decision to replace the original slate roof. Although asphalt shingles are fairly easy to acquire, the two-tab asphalt shingles on the Truman home were no longer manufactured. A special order was necessary and each of the 35 squares of shingles installed on the Truman roof had to be hand cut to match the historic appearance. During the removal of historic shingles, several items were found and dated to the period of the slate roof. Examples of slate fragments, fasteners, shingles, nails, sheathing boards, felt paper, and valley flashings, including both original and replacement materials, were added to the collection to document technology and material changes.

The two previously described projects were major undertakings for the site; however, many field collections have been generated from smaller projects. In the preparation of a historic home for park housing, several layers of wallpaper had to be removed to prepare wall surfaces for painting. Maintenance staff removed sections of the paper large enough to document wallpaper patterns and colors used by the occupants of the home. This type of field material allows us to document wallpaper patterns, and to consider the changing decorating trends in this structure.

Thorough field collecting is important to show impacts of site projects, but just as important are field notes and written project documentation. In order to make collections accessible and ensure accuracy of written records, site staff should discuss technical terms and information about specific items with project leaders. Valley flashings removed during the roofing project were made ofterne coat lead and tin and dated to the original slate roof period. Without WPTC input this information would not likely have been recorded. During the roofing project, drawings of the structures were used by site staff to record locations from which materials were removed. These draw-

ings are especially useful for catalogers and future users of the field collections. In the case of the roofing project, WPTC maintained complete notes that included pre-project planning and records of daily activities. The notes included details on purchasing source information, equipment and materials required to complete the project, notes about the special shingle order, and shingle modifications necessary prior to installation. The next roofing project for the Truman home will certainly run more smoothly as a result of the field collection and supporting materials.

Although the field collections and written project information have primarily been used for on-site study, the visual documentation completed during site projects has been shared in public outreach activities. Slides of restoration projects and associated field collections have been used in public programs to demonstrate the commitment of the NPS to preserving and protecting historic structures. Removed historic fabric compared to replacement materials, such as shingles, presents the opportunity to discuss NPS efforts toward presentation of historically-accurate structures and the challenges faced in acquiring accurate replacement materials. In addition to public programs, special tours of the collection storage area for

peers and other museum professionals have offered opportunities to demonstrate how field collections are used and to address the need to retain historic fabric for future research.

It is anticipated that with the recent addition of several structures and grounds to the site, the collections and use of field collections will increase. NPS areas have a responsibility to actively collect, document, and maintain structures and associated field collections, and to make available complete documentation for future study and treatment of historic structures.

Documentation provides an opportunity to be knowledgeable about past work and to record history of "a change" for the structure that might make a difference in future project planning and preservation maintenance activity. Developing field collections with forethought and maintaining cooperative relationships with other divisions enhances our ability to preserve, interpret, and maintain the historic structures entrusted to the National Park Service.

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*Carol J. Dage, museum curator, can be reached at Harry S Truman NHS, 223 North Main Street, Independence, MO 64050, 816-254-2720.*

Susan Kraft

## Restoring Wolves and Historic Interiors

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**Y**ellowstone National Park is known the world over for its spectacular geysers, abundant wildlife, and the rustic charm of its architectural treasures, such as the Old Faithful Inn. But, judging from the hundreds

of researchers who clamor for access to it, and the more than one million visitors who enjoy it each year, one of the most beloved and in-demand resources in the park is the museum collection.

The park's museum, library and archives staff has a strong tradition of encouraging and facilitating uses of park collections. In recent years, however,

demand for access to these collections has reached unprecedented levels. In 1994, more than 250

researchers sought access to the museum collection alone. The majority of these—about 85%—came in search of historic photographs from the park's collections of nearly 90,000 images for use in books, newspaper articles, and other publications (including the park's own quarterly, *Yellowstone Science*); videos, CD-ROMs, and television shows; and interpretive programs and training sessions. About half of these requests were from outside researchers, and half from park or other NPS staff.

### *Snapshots of History*

Outside requests for copies of photographs from Yellowstone's collection vary greatly. In the last year, for example, a clothing designer wanted to use a historic photograph of a handsome young ranger on a motorcycle as inspiration in her work; a request came in for photographs for a Ken Burns production; and TW Recreational Services, Inc. (TWRS), a park concessionaire, creatively employed copies of historic photos of "gear jammers," "pillow punchers," "pack rats," and other concessions employees of yore in its orientation classes.

Park maintenance staff, landscape architects, and biologists, as well as archeologists, ethnogra-

*Dear Ms. Kraft,  
Thank you for showing us around the museum. It was neat to learn what a curator does. I liked all the pictures and paintings. It was very nice of you to take time out of your job to show us the museum. Even though I have been to the museum before I didn't know everything.*

—Amanda Kebler

Yellowstone NP Elementary School